

toward them like Holofernes in "Love's Labor's Lost," who said of Don Adriano :

"He draweth out the thread of his verbosity
Finer than the staple of his argument."

HENRY D. CHAPIN, M.D.

Transactions of the Pennsylvania State Medical Society. Volume xv. Philadelphia : Collins, printer, 1883.

The present volume contains the proceedings of the meeting of the State Medical Society of Pennsylvania, held at Norristown, May 9, 10, 11, 1883. The first of the contents of this volume coming within the purview of this JOURNAL is the address on mental disorders by Dr. CURWEN of Warren. As might be expected from the occasion calling it forth it has of necessity a semi-popular character and cannot therefore with *justice* be submitted to strict criticism. He takes up at first the etiology of insanity and discusses this in a plain, practical manner, dealing specially with the mental condition of the mother during pregnancy in relation to "its influence on the foetus." Dr. Curwen clearly disagrees with the gentlemen who with one accord at the trial of Guiteau declared that neither disease nor mental traits could be transmitted, for he says (p. 114) : "Certain facts may be considered settled by the general observation of the profession, that tendencies to disease and, in many cases, the actual disease itself, may be transmitted from parent to child, and this tendency may be traced back through one or two generations ; that peculiarities of temper, inclinations to special pursuits, anomalous mental and nervous states, singular views on given subjects not the effect of education but a direct result of a similar condition in one or the other parent, developed before any education was begun, and other matters out of the ordinary course, which can only be referred to some disordered or abnormal condition of the parents." Excellent advice, from a popular stand-point, is given as to education, and with this the address closes.

The paper on "Insane Asylums, in Some of their Relations to the Community" deals with the "liberation epidemics" which have of late afflicted the United States. By the term "liberation epidemics" is meant the manufacture of sane men out of lunatics ; dangerous to themselves and the community by virtue of the great writ of *habeas corpus*. Dr. CHASE, however, in the case of Dr. S. compromises with the popular view of that case, and thereby tends to arouse in the unprejudiced mind of an

impartial observer the suspicion that he is desirous of being on the popular and scientific side at the same time. Such language as this does not befit a scientific alienist: "His case seemed to be one of those greatly aggravated by home treatment and still not sufficiently severe to need immurement." The man either needed hospital or home treatment; if he needed hospital treatment no self-respecting medical superintendent of a hospital for the insane would speak of such treatment as "immurement." His remarks on the injustice of throwing obstacles in the way of the commitment of the insane are just, but contain nothing but what has been said a hundred times by non-asylum alienists.

The paper by Dr. AYRES has in nearly all its points been anticipated by papers emanating from members of the New York Neurological Society. One fundamental error vitiates the paper. Dr. Ayres fails to perceive that the management of a hospital for the insane is the prime therapeutic factor in the treatment of its patients; that this must be committed to *one medical* man. To turn the finance, the gardening, etc. over to a layman independent of the superintendent, is to destroy the efficiency of the hospital. In cases where this has been done, as in the New York city institutions, when under charge of a warden, the comfort of the patients under a dishonest lay official is sacrificed to a greed for gain, and under an honest, to a desire for economy.

Dr. Ayres is, however, in the right as opposed to Dr. Kirkbride; the province of the physician should not be held secondary to the administrator. This fiction, diligently fostered by certain *doctrinaires*, has done much to support politicians in turning out efficient superintendents because they did not believe in scaling a State debt, and to encourage them in putting men in office who were destitute of knowledge of psychiatry because they gave fraudulent certificates of ill health to convict politicians suffering only from punishment for malfeasance in office. The remarks of Dr. Ayres on assistant physicians are in the main just. The indifference of assistants is a great evil; but, while the position of the superintendent is as insecure as it is at present, there will not be much change made in this respect, since the assistant physician will, as in the Indiana Hospital for the Insane, not to speak of others, intrigue against the superintendent for the latter's position; and "self-preservation is the first law of nature." The fault of this lies, in many cases, on the shoulders of the superintendent, who chooses men indifferent to psychiatry for fear of intrigues

by the scientific physician, and is deservedly punished by intrigues on the part of the indifferentist, who has nothing better to do. If consulting staffs be, as in the New York city hospitals, mainly composed of dilettante and medical politicians, they are useless ; if, as was the case at one time in the Cook County Hospital, they interfere with the discipline of the hospital, they are pernicious : neither a house nor a hospital divided against itself can stand. The remarks on gynæcological treatment are not as just as might be expected from the general tenor of Dr. Ayres' article. With the results of the rash gynæcological experiments in the New York city hospitals in remembrance, the "culpable" (*laissez aller*) policy of the superintendents has at least partial justification. The remarks on restraint are not judicious ; every thing is liable to abuse. To abolish a thing because of its liability to abuse is an argument justifying the disuse of medical treatment of insanity entirely. The means of prevention of cruelty proposed by Dr. Ayres are in active operation in every well-conducted hospital for the insane in the United States. This paper adds little to the practical resources of psychiatry. It shows very clearly, as did certain recent investigations in Kentucky, that the reform needed is not a reform of a system but of individuals. The transactions are well issued and well bound.

J. G. KIERNAN.

Report of Investigation of the Central Kentucky Lunatic Asylum, Louisville, Ky. Gilbert & Mallory Publishing Co., 1883.

This pamphlet seems to bring us back to the time when Bethlehem Hospital for the Insane was a slaughter-house, it being run entirely by the attendants; and to the days in the New York City Asylum for the Insane when the supervisor was more afraid of the attendants than he was of the patients. Miss Chevallier has given, very charitably, Dr. GALE credit for honesty in his intentions ; but, even assuming that he is honest in his intentions, he is an unfit person for the position of superintendent of a hospital for the insane. He is, to speak plainly, either mendacious or ignorant about the practices of his brother superintendents, and if, to be charitable, he be ignorant of these, how ignorant must he be of psychiatry elsewhere. It appears from this pamphlet (p. 76), that attendants duck patients at their option and without physicians being present, or (p. 79) under the direction of the supervisor only; that (p. 83) attendants *choke* patients.